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C O N F I D E N T I A L MUSCAT 000533

SIPDIS
DESK PASS TO DOC JREITZE AND THOFFMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019/06/01
TAGS: [EINV](#) [EINT](#) [ECIN](#) [PREL](#) [MASS](#) [MU](#)
SUBJECT: FIGHTER AIRCRAFT SALE NOT FINAL

REF: MUSCAT 365; MUSCAT 156

CLASSIFIED BY: Gary A. Grappo, Ambassador, State, Embassy Muscat;
REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) Oman apparently continues to assess whether to buy 18 Lockheed Martin F-16s or Eurofighter Typhoons made by BAE, but in this case being marketed by the UK. Press reports suggest that Oman has been offered 18 Eurofighters for 1.6 billion pounds sterling (about \$2.4 billion). Separately, Lockheed is offering 16 F-16s for \$1.4 billion. The Ambassador continued efforts during farewell calls to advocate on behalf of the F-16s and obtain additional information crucial to the bid process.

¶2. (C) On May 25 the Ambassador paid his farewell call on Minister of National Economy and Deputy Chairman, Financial Affairs and Energy Resources, Ahmed bin Abdulnabi Macki. Minister Macki continues to be an F-16 supporter given the decided price-performance advantage over the Eurofighter (see reftels). In the farewell call, the Ambassador briefed the minister on the latest Lockheed-provided cost data who took careful notes.

¶3. (C) The Ambassador and Office of Military Cooperation Chief met with Minister Responsible for Defense Sayyid Badr Saud Al Busaidi on May 30. The Ambassador raised the aircraft tender, the minister acknowledged the strength of the U.S.-Oman relationship and the advantages of the F-16. He noted, however, that Oman also enjoys good relations with the UK and that this would also be a factor. He added that a decision on the purchase could be deferred until next year.
GRAPPO